





“We continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.”

## WE CONTINUED

In Step 10, we shift our focus from what has taken place in the past to what is happening in the present. This does not mean that our work in recovery is done, however. Recovery is not an event. Much like the journey of sanctification, it is an ongoing process that we continue to work at over the course of a lifetime.

Although we have put a considerable amount of effort into personal change so far and have undoubtedly been significantly transformed, we cannot afford to become complacent about, nor would we want to apprehend, our ongoing growth and progress.

Complacency can be extremely destructive and has the potential to undo any progress we have made. When we become complacent, old habits can quickly reassert themselves in our lives and new unhealthy ones can easily develop. If we are not vigilant, we may soon find ourselves resorting back to old dysfunctional ways of being or creating different, but just as dysfunctional, patterns.

To avoid backsliding, we must continue to observe, examine, and work on ourselves in an intentional way. We do this in Step 10 by applying to our current reality, the same spiritual principles of self-reflection, self-honesty, humility, and ownership that we have applied to the past in previous steps. In this way, Step 10 helps us to sustain our long-term fruitfulness in recovery.

Unlike other steps that we start and finish, Step 10 is not a once-off task. Rather, as a “living” or maintenance step, Step 10 is an ongoing practice that we adopt and integrate into our way of life.

- In what ways have you changed in your recovery process so far?

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- What is the purpose of continuing to take a personal inventory?

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Let us examine our ways  
and test them, and let us  
return to the Lord.  
*Lamentations 3:40*

- How has your journey through the Steps so far prepared you personally for this process?

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## TO TAKE PERSONAL INVENTORY

One of the primary purposes of Step 10 is self-awareness. Referring to the insight that we have into our behaviours, emotions, thinking patterns, and spiritual state, self-awareness is what empowers us with the ability to change things about ourselves, to respond rather than react, and to thereby influence the course of our lives.

In Step 4, we raised our self-awareness by undertaking a searching and fearless moral inventory, in which we took stock of every aspect of ourselves. We did this to identify our assets and to expose the flawed beliefs, faulty behaviours, and unconstructive attitudes that had been holding us back and harming others.

When we take a personal inventory in Step 10, we use a similar method of thorough self-reflection for a similar purpose. However, we use a much-shortened process that we can practice regularly and, instead of reflecting on our past patterns, we examine our current actions, emotions, and attitudes.

We can think of a Step 10 like a self check-up. When we visit a doctor for a physical check-up, he completes several basic procedures to measure our blood pressure, temperature, and so forth. In Step 10, we also use a basic procedure to examine ourselves but instead of assessing our physical condition, we measure our spiritual, emotional, mental, and behavioural health.

- How self-aware do you consider yourself to be?

Rate yourself on a scale of 1 – 10, where 1 indicates, “I am completely out of touch with myself,” and 10 means, “I have exceptional insight into myself.”

①      ②      ③      ④      ⑤      ⑥      ⑦      ⑧      ⑨      ⑩

- How does self-awareness help you to sustain recovery?

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- How does self-awareness help you to live a life of abundance?

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Typically, a Step 10 inventory is comprised of a set of questions that we answer to assess ourselves in relation to certain values. Some people choose to write down their answers; others opt to complete the inventory mentally. In the beginning, when we are not as familiar with the process, a written inventory is preferable as this helps us to be thorough. A suggestion is to create a Step 10 Journal in which responses can be written down.

The general recommendation is that we take a personal inventory daily, especially initially, and that we set aside a regular time during the day to do this. This is because, to establish a new habit, consistency is required. We need the stable repetition of doing something consciously every day for it to become part of our rhythm of life.

Over time and with self-discipline, taking a personal inventory will become something that we do automatically. Keeping track of ourselves will become second nature and a continual self-awareness will ultimately develop. This is our aim. Such a level of insight makes us immediately aware when we are veering off course and grants us the opportunity to get back on track as soon as possible.

Self-discipline is a fundamental principle in Step 10. We must diligently work this step on a daily, or extremely regular, basis to reap its promise of self-awareness and the reward of sustainable recovery. This requires us to complete a personal inventory even on the days when we are tired and despite any lack of motivation that we may be feeling.

- Why is self-discipline so important in Step 10?

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- How does the practice of self-discipline in this step potentially impact your entire recovery process?

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- What factors may interfere with your self-discipline?

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- How could you overcome these challenges?

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- How often will you complete a Step 10 inventory?

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- At what time of the day will you take a personal inventory?

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Common questions to ask ourselves in a personal inventory are provided in the template below. These questions address general areas in which vigilance in recovery is essential, i.e., honesty, open-mindedness, ownership, willingness, gratitude, humility, service, recovery programme, progress, and spiritual growth.

### Step 10 Inventory Template

1. What have I done for my recovery today?
2. What have I done well today?
3. Have I been completely honest and transparent today?
4. Am I keeping anything to myself that should be shared with another person?
5. Have I maintained an attitude of gratitude today?
6. What am I grateful for?
7. How have I been of service to others?
8. How have I made time for God?
9. Have I been defensive, arrogant, or complacent today?
10. Have I done anything that I wish I had not done?
11. Do I owe anyone an apology?
12. What resentments am I carrying?
13. What fears are holding me back?
14. Am I allowing any emotions to build up?
15. How could I do better tomorrow?

We may also choose to add questions that address areas of particular concern to us as individuals. If rage is a personal issue, we may want to add a question that helps us to monitor our anger, e.g., “How did I manage my anger today?”. If we struggle with isolation, we may decide to add a question that helps us to keep an eye on how much time we are spending alone, e.g., “Did I reach out to or spend time with other people today?”

Here, it is important to consider our individual warning signs. These are the regressive shifts in our thoughts, attitudes, emotions, and behaviour that typically precede a physical relapse. We call such regressive shifts warning signs because they are indicators that we may be on our way towards a relapse.

Remember that relapse never happens suddenly or without warning. Relapse is a process that begins long before we pick up or act out. In this process, cognitive, emotional, and behavioural shifts first occur, in which we return to old dysfunctional ways of thinking, feeling, and doing.

For example, prior to drinking again, we may become complacent in our attitude towards recovery, stop attending recovery groups, and start to spend time with our old drinking friends.

Typically, warning signs manifest,

**a) cognitively**

in the reemergence of denial, cognitive distortions, and flawed beliefs

**b) emotionally**

in the reoccurrence of emotional avoidance or emotional build up

**c) behaviourally**

in the reappearance of behaviours that are congruent with the culture of addiction, such as deceit, isolation, disorder, self-will, etc.

Generally, each of us will follow a particular pattern in a relapse process. This means that what has occurred in the past is what we should be wary of in the present. If we have typically withdrawn from others prior to a relapse, we should be taking note of any isolation. If feelings of rejection have been a trigger, we should be on the lookout for such emotions.

- What old dysfunctional beliefs could be a threat to your recovery?

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- Create your own inventory. Write out all the questions that you would like to include in the rectangular space below labelled DAILY INVENTORY.

### DAILY INVENTORY

- Practice Step 10 by taking a personal inventory and writing your responses to the questions in the rectangular space below labelled STEP 10 JOURNAL.

### STEP 10 JOURNAL

## AND WHEN WE WERE WRONG

Essentially, what we are looking for in a Step 10 inventory are the beliefs, thoughts, feelings, and behaviours that could pose a threat to recovery, or are not congruent with the culture of recovery in which we have chosen to live. These are our “wrongs”.

In this context, our wrongs can include,

- harm that we cause someone else through, for example, defensiveness, aggression, dishonesty, blaming, prejudice, self-centeredness, unreliability, broken promises, slander, etc.
- harm that we cause to ourselves through, for example, addictive thinking, euphoric recall, compulsivity, impulsivity, negative self-talk, self-pity, laziness, codependency, isolation, complacency, etc.

Sometimes our wrongs will be obvious and easy to identify, for example, in the case of warning signs or in the instance of overtly unhealthy behaviours, such as using, lying, deceiving, or disrespecting others.

However, sometimes our wrongs will be less apparent.

In Song of Songs, we read about the danger of the little foxes that creep in to spoil the fruitful vines. What this scripture is referring to is the small, seemingly innocuous things that we think, say, and do that we may overlook as being a threat. The little foxes are those “minor” things that, when left to their own devices, can end up doing major damage. For example, a little fox of anger left unprocessed could develop into a toxic resentment. Unrealistic expectations could cause unnecessary relational conflict and a few white lies could set the precedent for more serious deceit.

Remember that recovery is not about abstinence alone. It is about radical change and personal growth. So, in a Step 10 inventory, we need to be on the lookout for not only our warning signs and obvious offences but also the little foxes - the pent-up emotions, negative perspectives, assumptions, and self-defeating behaviours that have the potential to gnaw away at our progress. Catching these little foxes before they have a chance to cause significant harm is one of the purposes and benefits of Step 10.

In Step 10, we identify our wrongs through our honest responses to the questions in our inventory. When we do identify a wrong, we are not to use this as a means for self-condemnation. The goal of Step 10 is not to make us feel inferior, inadequate, guilty, or shameful. The aim is to provide us with opportunities to right our wrongs and redirect our steps.

We can reassure and encourage ourselves with the truth that, as human beings, we all fall short at times. Getting everything right all the time is unrealistic, and if this is our expectation, we will end up frustrated and disillusioned. What is important in recovery is not perfection, but progress. How we respond to our personal inventory, with either self-criticism or with positive action, will determine how much benefit the practice brings.



**Catch for us the foxes,  
the little foxes that  
ruin the vineyards, our  
vineyards that are in  
bloom.**

*Song of Songs 2:15 NIV*

Although the wording of Step 10 places an emphasis on our wrongs, we also need to be looking out for our “rights” in Step 10. These are the areas in which we are making headway and the things that we have done well. Acknowledging these aspects is an essential part of value formation and is vital to the development of self-worth. We must be very careful not to allow our wrongs to overwhelm us and cause us to lose sight of our assets and our progress.

- Which little foxes could be problematic for you?

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- How hard is it for you to admit when you are wrong or “out of line”?

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- What does ‘progress, not perfection’ mean to you?

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- How can you minimise self-criticism and maximise positive action in response to the wrongs you identify in a Step 10?

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- How hard is it for you to accept your progress and the things that you have done well?

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- If you struggle in this area, how could you improve your ability to acknowledge your strengths and your growth?

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## PROMPTLY ADMITTED IT

To make Step 10 worthwhile and effective, it is critical that we are brutally honest with ourselves. Self-deception in a Step 10 is an exercise in futility, and, at the end of the day, we are the ones who lose the most, in that we miss out on opportunities for change and growth.

To accurately identify our wrongs, we must strive to be authentic and truthful when completing a personal inventory, and to be cognisant of the role of denial, that which can blind us to the truth about ourselves. We should also keep in mind that, like in Step 4, what we are concerned with in Step 10 is our own part, and not the role that others may have played.

Making a firm decision to better ourselves will assist us to embrace Step 10 with sincerity. Although owning up to our wrongs may be uncomfortable in the moment, this is how we grow and mature. We do not grow and mature when we reject the truth or when we limit ourselves to our comfort zones.

Timeous intervention is always important in recovery. Step 10 draws attention to this by using the word 'promptly'. We must not allow destructive beliefs, thoughts, and behaviours to prosper and fester, unaddressed, as this could lead to relapse and will end up undermining our ability to flourish as a new creation in recovery.

So, when we uncover a wrong, we immediately admit it, i.e., write or speak about it – to God, to ourselves, to our support system, wise counsel, accountability partners, or to the members of our recovery group. Then, we respond by taking steps to correct ourselves and/or to rectify the situation. These steps can include a personal commitment and effort to do things differently, a more formalised strategy for change, or both. In instances in which we have caused harm to another person, we can also apply what we have learnt in Steps 8 and 9 to make suitable amends.

The method of ownership and change that we choose will be dependent on the nature of the wrong itself. We need to consider what is appropriate, especially when it comes to making amends. However, it is always helpful to start by bringing our wrongs out into the light and sharing significant realisations with at least one other person from whom we can receive feedback, support, and direction.

- Why is brutal honesty so important in Step 10?

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- How does dishonesty make the Step 10 practice redundant?

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- What could be lost by not being honest with yourself?

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- Make a commitment to always be completely honest with yourself in Step 10.

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- With whom will you share your Step 10 realisations?

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- What have you learnt in Steps 8 and 9 about making appropriate amends?

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The encouragement of Step 10 is that the more that we practice the first half of it, i.e., take a personal inventory, the less often we need to practice the second half, i.e., promptly admit when we are wrong. Step 10 works in that the greater self-awareness that we develop, the less likely we are to find ourselves engaging in destructive patterns.



## ONWARDS AND UPWARDS

Once we have established a healthy habit of continuing to take personal inventory, we can move on to Step 11.

- On a scale of 1-10, how much effort have you put into Step 10?

1 indicates no effort. 10 indicates extreme effort.

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- What have been your most significant realisations in Step 10?

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- How could you apply the principles of Step 10 to help you **throughout** your recovery journey?

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- Are you ready to move on to Step 11?

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